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**BY SUNS AND STARS**



# BY SUNS AND STARS

BY  
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# BY SUNS AND STARS

## THE SONG OF THE WEST

THE Lord hath set her portals by the sea,  
Afront the rolling tide of India's flood,  
Whereon the vagrant winds blow lustily,  
Whereon the red sun dies in sheets of blood.  
With jutting cape she bites the heaving blue,  
Or sucks it into estuary and bay,  
Or cradles it on sandy beach to woo  
Sea-urchins through the drowsy summer day.

With jarrah canopies she crowns her hills ;  
She flakes her slopes with many-coloured blooms  
And in her valleys, cleft by crooning rills,  
The graceful bracken flaunts its froned plumes.  
She shrouds the silent plain in spinifex,  
And drapes it in a dim mysterious veil ;  
And there she limns the false mirage that becks  
The lost prospector on a hopeless trail.

She hath a song for all who care to hear,  
A melody that throbs at flush of day,  
And falls soft-toned upon the list'ning ear—  
A chorus where a million voices play,

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

When in its length the land gives daily praise  
To God, and ev'ry tiny-throated thing  
Of life takes up the tune in tender phrase—  
Then, rising with the sun, I heard her sing :

“ My need is love. For long, so long, I slept  
That, waking suddenly, the warm desire  
Of fertile birth and motherhood has leapt  
Through ev'ry vein, and flamed me with its fire ;  
And passion, garnered through long centuries  
Of dreamless sleep, bids me unveil and yield  
To love. I hear his whisper in the breeze,  
And yearn to see his presence stand revealed.

“ I want to be awakened in the morn  
By tripping feet of children on my breast ;  
I want the incense of the rip'ning corn  
When night is near to lull me into rest.  
I want the warm caress of sturdy men,  
Who stroke my neck and shoulders with the share,  
And clothe my shape with verdant herbage when  
The blazing sun of autumn lays me bare.

“ I wear no lustrous emeralds on my robe ;  
My garb is grey, my skirts are dusty brown,  
Yet from their folds, for all who care to probe,  
Gay gold is yielded for the victor's crown ;



---

## *The Song of the West*

---

And in my undulating flanks I hold

A rich fecundity that only waits

The virile touch of man to give tenfold

Beyond the wants which hungry care creates.

“For those who hate I hold chastising whips—

Red is my wrath and ruthless is my hand

When those to whom I offer smiling lips

Turn with derision to another land ;

But when they love I nurse them in my arms,

I furnish them with corn and oil and wine ;

I still their wailings in the night alarms—

They are my children and their woes are mine.”

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

BREAK O' DAY

THE stars that fell from the sky last night  
Lie thick on the freshened grass ;  
The East is stippled with amber light,  
Like the ripple of molten brass.  
The wakened dawn, with a scented sigh,  
Swings out of the billowed hills,  
And, waving her new-lit torch on high,  
The vault of the heavens fills.  
Through drowsy hollows the sun-shafts slide,  
And tickle the dreaming pools,  
Or scatter the mists of the fretted tide  
Where the cascade winds her spools.  
Beneath the frown of the stately gums  
You can see the wattles blush  
Like a bashful bride, as the daylight comes  
With his captivating rush.  
He shakes the sprays with a warm embrace,  
And kisses their golden tips,  
As a lover who finds his lady's face  
Is drawn to her ardent lips.

---

## *Break o' Day*

---

That magpie yonder, with organ throat,  
Is chanting his morning peal ;  
The choir of the bush has caught his note,  
And echoes his mirthful zeal.  
The dews that slept in the dark ravines  
When the sun recalled his rays,  
Creep ghost-like out of their leafy screens,  
And totter their feeble ways.  
High up in the wind the wayward leaves  
Are whispering last night's dreams,  
When fairies fought with the demon thieves,  
And mated their artful schemes.  
This is the morn of many a morn  
That my restless eyes have seen,  
But day would be as a friend forlorn  
If he brought no soothing queen—  
No Eve with a smile serene.

Come forth, sweetheart, from your couch of  
down,  
Where the dream-king holds the throne ;  
Of sunbeam gold I have built a crown,  
With a star across its zone.  
And I have jewelled the chaplet gay  
With a borrowed rainbow's hues ;  
So come, beloved, to the realms of day,  
And the darkling hours confuse.  
That artist Night, in his garb of gloom,  
Has copied your wondrous hair,

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

With here the curl of an opening bloom,  
And a trailing tendril there.  
His cunning forge in the shrouded glade  
Through the drooping hours has shone,  
And there with mallet and subtle blade  
He has joined the young shoots on.  
He filled the cups of the flowers rim-high  
With the scent your lips distil,  
And stole a beam from your curtained eye  
To sparkle an errant rill.  
The luscious curves of your virgin breast,  
With the ruby tips revealed,  
He took for a lily's milky crest,  
And a poppy's crimson shield.  
On hill and dale he has stamped your seal  
In witching colour and line ;  
The anxious buds on the vine conceal  
The thread of your rich design.  
By strife I wrested the throne from Night,  
And the world belongs to you ;  
The sweat I spent in the fearful fight  
Has drenched the bushes in dew.  
But by my strong right hand I have won,  
And the sooty foe has fled.  
The bushland beckons the morning sun,  
And Life laughs lightly, for Death is dead—  
Death died last night in his bed.

---

## *Sun-Fall*

---

### SUN-FALL

THE pilot with the golden ball,  
Who steers the wide-beamed ship of day,  
Has caught the ebb-tide's flooding fall,  
And seaward drifts his solemn way.

The cloudy bannerets that flew  
In streaming splendour round his head,  
Athwart the stately stretch of blue,  
Are gushing sympathy in red.

Down to the fading west he bears  
His freight of human joys and woes ;  
On sickened hopes and thickened cares  
The shutters of his hatches close.

His crew has scoured the crowded hives,  
Where men are bought and men are sold ;  
Grey fate has gambled with their lives,  
And dropped the pieces in his hold.

The stalwart peaks that front the sea  
Have eased the fervour of their gaze ;  
White mists are rising creepingly,  
And dim their view with hoary haze.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

The pocked and splintered battlements  
By tender dews are blotted out ;  
The staring raw and rugged rents  
With fleecy shawls are wrapped about.

From slipways moist a wet-nurse steals,  
And beads the bruised and tumbled leaves.  
Her damp hand touches and it heals ;  
By broken blooms she stoops and grieves.

The nighting things whose world is dusk  
Are tremulous for eager fray ;  
With silent lance and tiny tusk  
They probe the remnants of the day.

Some one old creek, whose ancient bed  
Was livened by an ardent flow,  
Sheds scanty tears through boulders dead,  
And drones a shaking chant of woe.

The few recluse and guarded ponds  
That lay in battle with the glare  
Are beckoning the bending fronds  
To veil with wreaths their bosoms bare.

An unseen sprite strews fiery dust  
Upon the blackened firmament ;  
Around the mountain's jagged crust  
A crescent of rare gold is bent.

---

## *Sun-Fall*

---

A shadow monk from shadow lands,  
Of face austere and sombre stole,  
With widened and menacing hands  
Lays fearful penance on the soul.

Now is the hour when men confess  
Their spirit's vague and vagrant flight  
Across the lengthened wilderness  
That flanks the sombre rim of night.

The air is clamorous with faults  
That ghoulish night has disinterred  
From secret and forgotten vaults  
Whose chambers hold the hidden word.

Each bush is pregnant with a threat,  
Each shadow holds calamity,  
And I must brave their biting fret  
Through hours of dreadful mystery.

Then in the pendant cloud of doom,  
With shackled eyes I kneel and pray  
To Him who from this musty gloom  
In kindness breeds another day.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE SUNS

THE day is drowsing in a swoon  
    Upon the ripples of a sea of light ;  
    And slow and dulled with vapour is his sight,  
Against the searching furnace of high noon ;  
And these poor hours that drag in shotted shoon,  
    Where once their pinions revelled in a flight  
    Towards the dusky borderland of night  
Will find him mirrored in a flooded moon.

Now is the season of the corn and fruits,  
    The grape voluptuous, with amber beads,  
    The pencilled peaches and the purple plums ;  
Now is the triumph of the tawny roots ;  
    Now is the fullness of the striving seeds ;  
    And sweated man into his harvest comes.



---

## *The Rains*

---

### THE RAINS

I SING no Winter draped in frozen snows,  
Nor shrouded in a veil of clinging sleet;  
But Winter, tripping on a million feet  
Of dancing raindrops; on whose garment glows  
The velvet sweetness of the twining rose,  
With garlands of the silver marguerite;  
Whose skirt is bordered green with bursting  
wheat;  
Whose breath wafts scents on ev'ry breeze that blows.

Long months the wan grey earth has lain beneath  
The overpow'ring ardour of the sun,  
Whose flames have ravished her and left her  
bare;  
But now at Winter's touch she weaves a wreath  
Of all-concealing greenery, that none  
May see the scars of Summer's passion there.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

THE SAPLING

THE black seed, bursting, gives to life a tree,  
Which points its tiny sepals at the sky,  
And waves its leaves, like wings, as if to fly  
The sordid base of its captivity.  
The tender branchlet holds no memory  
Of dank recesses where its forbears lie—  
No stain of earth offends the captious eye—  
No rust of mould obscures its greenery.

So when in sullen soil thy seed was set  
And watered by a thousand bloody tears,  
From that foul grime there sprang in purity  
A sapling, virginal as Spartan maid,  
That, wresting substance from the falling years  
Raised in thy heart the tree of Liberty.

---

## *The Union*

---

### THE UNION

No angry menace of a hostile foe,  
    No blatant barking of a loud-mouthed gun,  
    No rush of shiv'ring fear, has made us one  
Within our tide-borne ring of indigo ;  
But brothers spoke in brotherhood, and, lo,  
    The barriers fell like mists before the sun,  
    And newly-wakened Love arose and spun  
The strands which bind our fates for weal or woe.

God grant the Union peace, the peace that holds  
Security. God grant us liberal moulds  
In which to shape ourselves, and forge us strong  
Each one too proud to do the other wrong ;  
Each one too brave to lift a tyrant hand ;  
Each growing wiser as the years expand.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE SOUTHERN BRIDE

BEHIND the close-hung curtains of the past,  
Whose woof was woven from the filmy space  
Wherein the gods make playground, she, the last  
Of Earth's implorant childling, rose in place.  
No rite conventional, no parchment script,  
Bore witness to her coming. In the night  
The love that gave her being first was lipped,  
While the pale stars withdrew their gentle light,  
And all the rolling chariots of Time  
Were still'd. Then, with the scented morning breeze,  
She drew her living from the peaks sublime,  
And took her station in the southern seas.

Gay dawns and amber sunsets, in their glow,  
Made rich her colour and endowed her land;  
And the clean wavelets in their lapping flow  
Washed white the circling border of her strand.  
The tempest and the wind brought fruitfulness,  
The painted apple and the ample grain,  
The silk-tipped corn, the flavour of the press,  
The luxury of riverside and plain;  
And living waters on the mountain side,  
Or stately streams, whose deep and potent flood  
Quenches the fiery drought, and freshens wide  
The thirsty pasture with enriching blood.

---

## *The Southern Bride*

---

The earth in mighty straining sweated gold,  
The shackled sea in sympathy wept gems,  
That he who came a-wooing might behold  
Her crested with a thousand diadems.  
And she was ribbed with wondrous ores and steel,  
And rooted to the universal heart,  
That all the burden of a commonweal  
Might find her trussed secure in ev'ry part.  
Yet loth to bind the impulse of a soul,  
She held great spaces where the froward few,  
Who dare to tamper with an ancient scroll,  
Could in the free expanse enhance her view.

The ache of motherhood was in her veins,  
A tender yearning for the feeble ones  
Whose life is dyed with the incessant stains  
Of toil, to nurse them into sturdy sons.  
To those encompassed by the rings of caste  
She offered freedom and the right to rise ;  
No stern tradition of the faded past  
Laid ruthless handicap upon the prize.  
Her ways were clear, with stretches of clear light  
Wherein the meek and lowly might outspan,  
And view unhampered, in ascending flight,  
The pathway to the eminence of man.

But as her bosom leaked its fruitful store  
Into the thirsting mouths, with that same stream  
She blended courage for the seasons sore  
And sanity to mesh the sprightly dream.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

For noble ardour must implant its roots  
Within the stony soil of duty ere  
The thrusting branches hold the fullest fruit,  
Or the rich bloom of crowned achievement bear.  
Assured love is in tribulation born,  
And strengthened by the bitter blows of fate.  
The tender rose surmounts the stabbing thorn,  
And proud rewards on spurred endeavour wait.

The cross that blazes on her crest is not  
An idle bauble flung in lavish mood ;  
The token prints upon her children's lot,  
The sacrifice and bond of holy-rood.  
By each white point she counts a virtue sworn,  
That prudence shall with fortitude combine,  
And in the clash of quarrels yet unborn  
Stand stark beneath the shadow of the sign.  
The badge that beckoned in the centuries  
When man was creeping to the higher goal  
In this new land is flaunted to the breeze—  
The outer symbol of the inner soul.

She spread a sun-tanned wilderness to test  
The merits of her kind, and forests deep  
In sleuth to urge them on her rugged quest  
That leads for ever to the upward steep.  
She swung the sharp-edged drought across their fields  
And scathed their flocks with desolating sword ;

---

## *The Southern Bride*

---

She bit their crops and pinched the lavish yields  
Of corn to strengthen them before the Lord.  
She sucked the waters of their springs, and set  
A false mirage upon the changing sands ;  
The elements assailed, but, loving yet,  
She worked new wonders in their lonely lands.

The silent desert quivers with her songs,  
The barren boulders break in martial strains,  
When to the roll of Heaven's thund'rous gongs  
The firmament dissolves in luscious rains ;  
While secret seeds warm to her mother-feel,  
And rear their tribute in a green array,  
And the torn places of her body heal  
With fragrant unguents that defy decay.  
Then on the murmur of the crowded leaves  
She blows the trumpet note of hope, and calls  
Her weary legion to the clust'ring sheaves  
That gather fieldwards as the harvest falls.

You who have drawn her vigour with the breath  
That first inspired your mortal crust of clay ;  
You who have sought her when the wings of death  
Swept ominously close upon their prey ;  
You who have spoken her on lonely trails,  
Where nothing is and everything begins,  
Where the great God, with sigh, lifts up the veils,  
And lets the sunlight shudder on your sins ;

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

You who have sat with her on ev'nings grey,  
When the lost stars lit hurried lamps above,  
And timid torrents whined their rocky way—  
Has she unbosomed aught to you but love?

By her lone hills and by her reddened plains,  
By stealthy valleys and by ancient falls,  
By gorges where a mystic silence reigns,  
Save for the echo when the magpie calls;  
For thought-worn vigils in the droving nights,  
For cloistered labour in the reeking drives,  
For shining furrows where the ploughshare bites,  
And the lean bushman in his mission strives—  
In the rich current of her tawny fleece,  
In the excess and riot of her gold,  
In her wide acres' bearing and increase,  
She pays the claims of love a thousandfold.



---

## *The Pledge*

---

### THE PLEDGE

YOUR lands were set for the coming, your shores were  
clear of foes ;  
League upon league of pasture yearned for your whetted  
hoes ;  
Upland, plain, and valley were tight with the fat of  
earth, .  
And the keen grass locked its fibres to hold their stirring  
birth.  
All these things were given ; and the Cross in the sky  
above  
Was set as a pledge of Labour—of Labour and of  
Love—  
That in the unhewn forest, the clean and virgin plain,  
Your hands should gather the harvest of wood and wine  
and grain ;  
Nor bind a weaker vessel with crafty script and claim  
To sweat in the naked furrows while you lay in idle  
shame ;  
That as you laboured together in tempest or in shine,  
So in the hour of sorrow your hearts would interwine ;  
Shoulder to shoulder in danger, knee to knee in praise ;  
Thus would you live as brothers in the fullness of your  
days.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

Now is the time accomplished—what have your children  
done?

A hundred years are reckoned—how does your record  
run?

True to their pledge, our sons have borne their meed of  
toil,

Spacing the thick-set forest, nursing the loosened  
soil.

The dawn has heard their footsteps, till night their axes  
flew,

And out in the lonely backlands their scattered home-  
steads grew.

They faced the changing seasons, they fought the sullen  
drought,

Where the steel-tipped sun bit deepest, and sucked the  
waters out.

They scented the earth's snug treasures, they probed her  
secret veins;

Yet roving, free, and resourceful, little they counted the  
gains.

Man to man was their motto, solid as steel without  
flaw,

Thus they fulfilled the compact, thus they obeyed the  
law.

And not by muscle alone did our sons their burden  
bear—

In days of stress and clamour they wrought by speech  
and prayer

---

## *The Pledge*

---

That the laws they furthered be just to the helpless as  
the strong,  
Nor cloak in pious silence an all-pervading wrong.  
Staunch they stand to their measures, by the written  
word abide,  
For the trust that was laid upon them they lived and  
fought and died.

Good! for the fight is freedom. Good! for the task is  
theirs  
To cherish the weeping million into a million heirs—  
Heirs to the Lord's own kingdom of corn and fruit and  
vine,  
Who, when He gave you children, saith "All these things  
be thine."  
Now in the years of abundance the pledge shall be  
renewed,  
Yet shall they hold it gravely, temperate, patient,  
subdued.  
By the strength of the older nations their strength must  
be compared ;  
They have bidden the world give hearing—their terms  
have been declared,  
Their house must be set in order, the weaker walls made  
good ;  
No rift must show in the timber of a trustful brother-  
hood.  
Then, as they stand united, so long as the Cross  
endures,

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*By Suns and Stars*

---

The pledge they have given and taken shall shelter you  
and yours.

Free of the taint of serfdom, stout in your children's  
right,

In the sight of the Lord of All Things you shall be His  
delight.

And as He giveth His blessing, tenfold shall your tribe  
increase—

Reliant, certain, and faithful, then shall your land know  
peace.

---

## “Sentry Go”

---

### “SENTRY GO”

“SENTRY, what of the night? The darkness hems us  
round;

The sky is black with menace; the sea has caught the  
sound;

The omens press their summons on lands devoid of  
life—

Who holds the vacant acres must hold by strength in  
strife.

The pledge is laid upon you to keep your island  
white—

Does each hand hold a rifle? Sentry, what of the  
night?”

“Our watch-fires burn behind us, our arms are at our  
sides,

And hard by silent ranges the sturdy bushman rides;  
He read the evil portent where plains lay burnt and  
bare,

And broke the leagues of distance as only bushmen  
dare.

No conscript net has bound him, no barracks claimed  
his soul,

But in the fight for freedom his name is on the roll.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

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“This continent is veined with rich Australian pride;  
Our fathers brewed its courage before they fell and  
died.

To seaward stands our fortress, but landward is our  
heart;

By arsenal or desert we fight our stubborn part;  
And if by fate and fortune we make the downward  
path,

Let life and hope together assuage the Maker's wrath.

“Britannia gave us honour; her seed is scattered  
here,

And shall it rot in bondage, or shrink in craven fear?  
The blood that bought dominion by frequent stress and  
strain

Shall hold our land together, as it has held the main.  
Nor shall we quake at struggle, nor wear the easy  
smile

That waits upon dishonour and smooths the path of  
guile.

“Australia's life is open, she needs no coward's  
smirk;

Unto her sons is granted the right to live and work;  
And by her daily vigils and by her nightly glean  
She holds the white race wholesome and keeps her  
markets clean.

And if her children prattle, and if her fathers glow,  
Remember she is watching, alert, at sentry-go.”

---

## *The Call*

---

### THE CALL

FROM that lone island in the Northern Sea,  
Hard-guarded by the undulating wave,  
Whose reddened meadows bore us ancestry,  
And nourished freedom in an unkempt grave,  
Through water and rough earth a summons leapt  
To frozen zones and to abundant spring,  
To those who vigil held and those who slept,  
"Come ye, my children, and salute the King."

The tide of eager blood that flowed afar  
When liberty unloosed the stiffened gates  
And flung the doorway of new worlds ajar  
Paused in its purpose, laid aside its freights,  
And hearkened to the message with hot heart;  
And then the wash that licked each distant wall,  
Or scoured new runnels on a vacant chart,  
Rolled back in flooded splendour to the call.

They came, these sons of Empire, with keen face,  
And corded back and shoulders resolute,  
And bold. Stern nature bred them true to race,  
And circumstances little changed their suit.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

Not children these, but bearded men and strong,  
Firm in their father's faith and straight in  
thought;

Theirs were the widened ways and spaces long  
Who simple homage to their Sov'reign brought.

He greeted them with candour and gave speech,  
And laid warm welcome on their rugged hands.  
He knew himself their leagues of lonely beach,  
He knew the mysteries of all their lands.  
The sea that held the home inviolate  
Had served his passages to every clime,  
While yet the ermine of his high estate  
Was folded in the spacious robe of time.

Not children these, but brothers to the bone,  
Knights of his table, equal in their right,  
Proud of his person, jealous of his Throne,  
And threefold jealous of his country's might.  
Not theirs the servile service of the lip,  
Nor sweetened speech, but unaffected deed.  
Their armour rested on the loin and hip,  
They stood for ready duty at his need.

As such he gave them counsel and his grace,  
And showed the path of inner brotherhood,  
With penalty and burden of high place;  
And, marvelling, they heard and understood



---

## *The Call*

---

That he who spoke was helmsman at the wheel.  
And when the feast and pageantry were done,  
With oath affirmed and charged with freshened zeal  
In sobered step they parted one by one.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

MY COUNTRYWOMAN

I SING my countrywoman, she whose charms  
Illuminate the city's rigid ways :  
She of the clear and amber-tinted arms,  
And eyes like sunshine leaping through a haze ;  
Whose finished form is moulded to display  
The vain accomplishments of fashion's art ;  
Who stands the goddess of the fruitful day,  
And tribute levies on each swollen mart ;  
She whose light battery of dulcet smiles  
Is flanked by a brigade of solemn tears ;  
Whose tempting pout and fondling touch beguiles  
The greedy hand of commerce from its shears.

I sing her also in the lonely lands,  
With crowded trees as valiant sentinels  
Towards a rude invasion ; their gaunt hands  
Atwist against the axe that bleeds their cells ;  
She, the kind mate of him whose finished toil  
Is but the cradle of new work begun,  
Where the insistent voices of the soil  
In concert rake the heart from sun to sun.

---

## *My Countrywoman*

---

There, loose-apparelled, with protective mien,  
She courts her fledglings from a humble pen,  
And with full breast and easy, careless wean,  
Becomes the mother of a breed of men.

Aye, but I sing her heart, that priceless urn,  
Wherein the virtues of great Heaven drain,  
And in whose chamber of sweet honour burn  
To dross and ashes each ignoble strain ;  
That takes the twisted ore of self, and mills  
It into gentle shape ; whose burdened jars  
Of lavish love, dew-fragrant from the stills,  
Are stolen stealthily beneath the stars ;  
Whose essence warms the senses to a glow,  
And the pale face of misery uplifts,  
And like clean rain upon the waters low  
Breaks softly in a shower of tender gifts.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE BOUQUET'S BURDEN

A HALF-MOON leant on the eastern hills  
As I flung the window wide,  
And I saw the sky grow opal-white  
In the wash of her silver tide.  
A wandering breeze went drifting by,  
And sang in a minor key,  
And I told my love in its careless ear  
For want of sympathy.

'Twas told by the wind to a bold sunflower,  
Who reared his head in pride ;  
He spoke the tale to a shy sweet pea,  
Who drooped her blooms and sighed ;  
She dropt the words to the flowers beneath,  
And all in the garden knew—  
The while a cricket chirped his song—  
That I was in love with you.

The story ran from flower to flower,  
With all its sad refrain,  
That though my love lay at your feet  
You passed it with disdain ;

---

## *The Bouquet's Burden*

---

And, when their fibres felt the stress  
Of this emotion new,  
They hung their heads in mute regret,  
And wept in tears of dew,

I rose this morn when in the east  
The sky was stained with red,  
And plucked the sympathizing blooms  
Still wet with tears half-shed ;  
I wrought them in a cunning bunch,  
Of mingled white and hue,  
And now I send this brave bouquet  
To bear my love to you.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE CHALLENGE

I PAUSED as the woman was passing ;  
The crowd flung me out of my place ;  
But her roving eyes swung in their orbits,  
And focussed their glance on my face.  
A moment it lit, and then vanished  
As swift as the swing of a bird,  
And left me with eyes that were swimming,  
And ears that but vacantly heard.  
And all that my brain could remember,  
As I shook myself up with a start,  
Were insolent eyes that were staring  
Through mine to the depth of my heart.  
Grey eyes could not glance with that boldness,  
Nor blue with that passionate light,  
Nor brown, with their deep amber softness—  
But only orbs black as the night.  
And they must be liquid and gleaming,  
Like metal grey-hot from the fire,  
And full of a tentative meaning  
That quickens the flame of desire.

---

## *The Challenge*

---

Shall I take up the challenge she threw me—  
The lightly-cast taunt of her sex,  
That womanhood dangles before us  
While binding her chains on our necks?  
Shall I bite at the lure of the tempter,  
Red lips, with their subtle demand;  
Or crouch, like a dingo in hiding,  
If Prudence but lift up her hand?  
Shall I call myself man or a nithing?  
Shall I churn my red blood into milk?  
Shall I flee at the shimmer of satin,  
Or faint at the rustle of silk?  
Shall I hang in the wind when a woman  
Gives signal to follow her? No!  
Should pleasure or pain be the profit,  
The gods may decide. I shall go.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

THE PENITENT

DEAR little one, and have you waited,  
Content, your hand within Time's arm,  
While I have roamed away, unsated,  
Remem'bring not your winsome charm?

Some bolder eyes than thine must surely  
Have flashed their flame across the sea,  
And I did venture, unsecurely,  
On phantom tracts away from thee.

By shelly beaches I have wandered,  
And busy paths have known my quest;  
In wanton cities I have squandered  
A heritage to move one breast.

And like a spendthrift whose profusion  
Has wrecked the fullness of his store,  
And poverty, with bold intrusion,  
Knocks on the lintel of his door.



---

## *The Penitent*

---

I, having nothing left but remnants,  
    Feel diffident to offer these,  
And shrink to vex your kind remembrance  
    With sparkless dregs and tasteless lees.

My palaces to dust have crumbled,  
    And shame is heaped upon my head ;  
My pride is eaten up, and, humbled,  
    I walk alone in shoes of lead.

My nut-brown locks have grown more precious  
    Through scarcity, and Time, with sighs  
Has flung a net of graven meshes  
    About the corners of my eyes.

Perhaps I wrong him and his spinners,  
    Maybe their traces are but thin,  
And I exaggerate, as sinners,  
    Repentant, magnify their sin.

So, taking courage in my trouble,  
    I loose my heart-strings to your hand ;  
Who offers quickly offers double,  
    And thus I meet your just demand.

Dear little one, do you remember  
    Our parting by the garden gate ?  
Sly Love, that mischievous dissembler,  
    Betrayed me and reversed my fate.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

You heard the string of wild romances  
That chased each other on my lip;  
You gently smiled, and in your glances  
I read a wondrous fellowship.

Yet as a dolt who follows pleasure  
With vision darkened and unwise,  
And holds the mirror as the treasure,  
I missed the secret of your eyes.

I wonder, in my better learning,  
If those swift gleams that crossed their plane  
Were flashes from your heart's warm burning,  
Like firelight on a window pane.

To-morrow, dear, a boat is sailing;  
My heart is hot, I cannot wait;  
And if a prayer be still availing  
I pray to meet you by the gate.

---

## *The Vindication*

---

### THE VINDICATION

HE sought his fate in a shaded seat  
Where spangled night and the moist dusk meet,  
Away from the tread of sandalled feet

That threshed the glowing room.

The scented pea and the mignonette  
With ev'ning dew and their balm were wet,  
And high in the eaves green girdles met

In one resplendent bloom.

An opal light shed a vagrant ray  
Through twisted vines and the locked array  
Of curling tendrils, to where she lay,

Like Venus in repose.

The arum leaves reared a stalwart shield,  
And painted pennons upon its field,  
With waving shadows, but half-concealed

Her tiny, tempting toes.

The haze, that hung on the night's black tress,  
On cheek and hand threw a soft caress,  
And heaped the curves of her silken dress,  
And toned its wondrous dyes.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

But clear as the vestal's temple flare,  
And burning blue as the sapphire rare,  
And deep as the heaven's cloudless stare,  
The light shone in her eyes.

He spoke of wealth and its gorgeous train,  
Of pleasure throned on a golden wain,  
And lordly life with its wide disdain,  
And idle hands to choose.  
He threaded a tale of luxury,  
Of emerald land and turquoise sea,  
And splendid spaces where souls were free—  
She tapped her beaded shoes.

He marvelled honour and high estate,  
The spacious halls where a thousand wait,  
And self is hidden in robes of state,  
And rank repels all doubt.  
Where power is veiled in a blue-veined hand,  
And fate is hung on an auburn strand,  
Where few may sit and the many stand—  
She answered with a pout.

His ardour shook as her shining breast  
Behind its laces reclined to rest,  
But fainting courage regained its zest  
Before her luscious charms.

---

## *The Vindication*

---

Her beauty stood as a queenly gage,  
A trophy fit for a knightly wage,  
And daunting hazards, in lofty rage,  
    He caught her in his arms.

He crushed her close as a strong man can,  
For she was a maid and he a man,  
And so it was since the world began,  
    The woman answered yea.  
He kissed her lips with a conscious power,  
The red rims sank like a bruised flower,  
Her soul went out in a tearful shower—  
    My lord, I wed to-day.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE WIND AND THE MAID

My lover is the wind. I know  
Of none more saucy in mankind,  
When, with his arrow and his bow,  
He chases me the hay behind,  
And, wheeling through the grasses low,  
He smothers me with kisses blind.

If I ascend the ferny hill,  
Where the grey wattle hugs the vine—  
Though virtue rests upon my will,  
And simple innocence is mine—  
With easy touch he tempts me still  
Across the merry border-line.

Down by the river, where the mint  
Confers her fragrance on my feet,  
And daisies in long furrows glint,  
Like lanterns in a lively street,  
He comes in ardour to imprint  
Caresses sly and yet discreet.

---

## *The Wind and the Maid*

---

The gay morn with her widened fan  
Waves him against my window panes,  
With becks and whispers sweeter than  
The magpie's carol on the plains,  
Or shepherd's songs to piping Pan,  
Or nightingales in lovers' lanes.

When the cold curtain of the night  
Drops softly on reclining day:  
With trophy set, my worthy knight  
Attacks the leagues of lonely way,  
And when the darkness breeds affright  
His whistling blade is turned to slay.

Not knight alone, but minstrel he,  
With melodies for ev'ry mood,  
With sparkling rhymes for chivalry,  
And Lenten hymns for sober food,  
And gusty chords of sympathy  
To shake grey sorrow and her brood.

My lover is the wind, but, oh!  
Some days his passion lamely halts,  
And when I hear no echo low  
Responding from the sapphire vaults  
I pray the gods to me would blow  
A son of Adam and his faults.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

THE KISS

HER face drooped near, and could I ban it?  
Should I resist such bliss,  
Or steal from lips of pomegranate  
One little honeyed kiss?

What would you do, my doleful brother?  
A second Joseph be?  
Or do as I, and snatch another  
Sweet taste of ecstasy?

And having felt the manhood in you  
Take toll without dismay,  
I ask you now, would you continue,  
Or would you turn away?



---

## *The Supper Dance*

---

### THE SUPPER DANCE

ONE lone musician of the band  
Is left to weave his dreamy airs,  
As you and I together stand  
Beside the line of vacant chairs.

The glitter and the pomp have gone,  
And faded is the galaxy ;  
The tapers dimly flicker on  
An empty floor and you and me.

We need no garish flame to light  
The pathway of our dance divine ;  
The love-glow in your eyes to-night  
Is beacon-ray for yours and mine.

A single chord rings through the hall  
In passionate acclaim, and we,  
Like shepherds tripping to a call,  
Break into realms of fantasy.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

The banners rustle to their head,  
The solemn palms are filled with elves,  
And silently the walls outspread  
Like mirrors mirrored in themselves.

No sombre wood receives our feet ;  
We tread on ether flecked with gold  
And in the music's rhythmic beat  
The alphabet of love is told.

I see the curves about your breast,  
With purple shadows in between,  
Where covertly your secrets rest  
Behind a laced and silken screen.

The perfume of your glowing hair  
Has trickled from a violet's bell,  
Or Daphne, swimming in the air,  
Above the ranks of asphodel.

The hemlock juice and tainted bane  
That spur the feelings of the East  
Are lees and dregs of old champagne  
Beside our sprightly-footed feast.

The world is ours by right of youth,  
And kingdoms tremble as we turn ;  
We are the lords of love and truth,  
Before whose altars all things burn.

---

## *The Supper Dance*

---

The voice of all the voices rings,  
And Heav'n drops her solemn bars,  
And we ascend on sweeping wings  
Amidst a cataract of stars.

The jealous gods, enwrapt in ice,  
Whose clouded eyes betray regret,  
Must watch us waltz to Paradise,  
Wherein our souls are dancing yet.

THE GAVOTTE

WE had been sated with the waltz,  
The fickle polka held no joy ;  
Quadrilles were frivolous and false,  
And lancers an abandoned toy.

Then came to ear a rippling strain,  
As though a hundred creeks were free,  
With bubbling call and belled refrain,  
To brew enchanted melody.

Some angel poured the liquid notes  
In glasses thin as gossamer ;  
We drank to him with eager throats,  
And drained a shapely glass to her.

You saw Sir Galahad, and I  
The prisoned lady of Shallot,  
But there was rapture in her sigh  
That night we chased our first gavotte.

---

## *The Gavotte*

---

We left the set and ordered dance,  
In room sedate and well arrayed,  
And paced the borders of romance,  
Where mortals as immortals played.

There was no time, there was no tide,  
And naught but splendour of the morn ;  
Maybe some one we knew had died,  
Perchance another soul was born.

But with the tinkle of the strings  
A magic mirror cleared our minds,  
And on the play of common things  
We drew the close and shuttered blinds.

Where Egypt's strident trumpets blared  
In honour of the fruitful Nile,  
And curling flames on altars flared,  
We paused awhile and danced awhile.

Then Greece unrolled her monuments,  
As some grey-haired and feeble nun,  
With modest pride, her ornaments  
Lays humbly to the gentle sun.

And Rome that once with state was filled  
By feasting hall and pompous street—  
She who was curved and seven-hilled—  
Responded to our restless feet.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

There were thick verdures where the leaves  
Assailed in raining tenderness,  
And we became amidst the sheaves  
A shepherd and a shepherdess.

Then where the tents of chivalry  
Proud pennons hoisted to the sky,  
We rode the lists, a knight and she  
Whose beauty duelled ev'ry eye.

But always as the music bid,  
And always as the ripple ran—  
Now striking with the princely Cid,  
And now again a simple man.

Yet as emotion shook the strings  
Whose melody creates desire—  
The subtle song the siren sings  
By wreathing wave to empty lyre—

We knew that thief, old hangman Time,  
Whose mission is to blur and blot,  
Could not efface that night sublime,  
That night we danced our first gavotte.

---

## *The Girl in Green*

---

### THE GIRL IN GREEN

THE world is full and fresh and fair,  
And splendid are its ways;  
But I, upon a cripple's chair,  
Must loiter through the days.

The tides of mingled creed and class  
That shape the human stream  
Before my latticed arbour pass  
Like phantoms in a dream.

As figures in a puppet show  
They move on set affairs,  
And oddly strange it is to know  
My world is also theirs.

That one who limps in gait uncouth,  
With cold and heavy phlegm,  
May bear the lamp of endless youth,  
Or Aristotle's gem.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

And she with mantle disarranged,  
Who droops on catching feet,  
Perchance with whitened angels played  
Behind some sorry street.

And so they shuffle on the path  
That God has drawn for each—  
One moment silent in His wrath,  
The next alive with speech.

I wondered what this foaming rush  
Would drift and toss to me,  
When the full tide in solemn hush  
Broke for the stretching sea.

But as a current bends its course  
To some magnetic call,  
This wave of souls retrieved its source,  
And passed my outer wall.

And when the ebb had died in froth  
Beside the poplars lean,  
Upon a square of verdant cloth  
I saw a girl in green.

The gay day laid a diamond spray  
Upon her amber hair,  
Just where the curls in furrows lay  
Like earth behind the share.



---

## *The Girl in Green*

---

The flowers that homaged to the sun  
    Before his highest place,  
In courtly turns of dances spun  
    To glow upon her face.

The curves she threw against the vines  
    With lissome bust and waist  
Were wild, intoxicating lines  
    Upon a languid taste.

Those widened trees, whose pleasant leaves  
    Obscured the stinging heat,  
Dropt fragments from rich summer sheaves  
    Around her turfy seat.

She drew a lazy glance upon  
    The mingled gold and green,  
As idly as a floating swan  
    Surveys her mirrored sheen.

And then, as some out-staring tower  
    That proudly fronts the sea,  
And winks the warning of the hour,  
    She turned her flame on me.

The gaze that slipt, with beam intense,  
    Across my bamboo screen,  
Was neither vice nor innocence,  
    But something in between.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

If I could scoop the starry night  
Of all its wealthy show,  
And blend the blazes in one light  
On shy Aurora's bow.

Then might I rival this clear flood  
Of warm expectancy,  
That fills the channels of the blood  
With surging sympathy.

Such eyes as these, by grace of God,  
And once in many years,  
Call down upon the helpless clod  
The thrilling dew of tears.

As one who, blinded at his birth,  
By mercy is repaired,  
And drinks the beauty of the earth,  
So I with glory flared.

No archer who, with doubtful dart,  
Draws at a hidden mark,  
Was stronger strung than I whose heart  
Gave back the raptured spark.

Maybe my vision was oblique,  
And missed the girl in green,  
For when I came again to seek,  
Grey shadows filled the scene.

---

## *The Girl in Green*

---

There was no colour in the view,  
No sunshine trickled on  
A phantasy of line and hue,  
Because my girl was gone.

Again, with frothy fringe, the tide  
Rolled backwards on its beat  
Across the land where fancies ride,  
And sealed my still retreat.

Yet as upon the turbid stream  
A fallen petal boats,  
So in and out and on my dream  
The moss-hued maiden floats.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### “PAPA”

“PAPA! If all the earth were gold,  
And all the clouds were pearl;  
And diamonds leapt from each wave's tip  
Where breakers roll and curl;  
If all the bush were thick with gems  
That dropt from every tree;  
If silver fell instead of snow—  
What would you buy for me?”

“My messengers, to every star,  
Would fly on lightning wings,  
And search their spheres from pole to pole  
To find you wondrous things;  
The treasures of the sun and moon,  
The splendour of the skies,  
Would 'twixt the morn and eventide  
Be laid before your eyes.”

“Papa! If you had all the power  
That moves the world around;  
That lifts the stars from eastern hills  
Like silver lights unwound;

---

## *“ Papa ”*

---

That sucks the tide from shore to shore,  
That rocks the Winter sea ;  
That shapes the winds from lifeless air—  
What would you do for me ? ”

“ The morn would always be the morn,  
And Spring would never die ;  
And Youth would burn its rosy light  
For ever in your eye ;  
And I would set you on a throne  
Where land and water meet,  
And thread a nation on a string  
To wait about your feet. ”

“ Papa ! If you had all the love  
That babies at their birth  
Bring in their hearts from Angel-land,  
And loosen on the earth ;  
And all the love the birds pour in  
Their nesting melody ;  
And all the love of mother-things—  
How much would you give me ? ”

“ From mountain top to lowly plain,  
From desert to the sea,  
All human hearts would ope their valves  
And yield their love to me ;

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

My spies would sift the ends of earth  
To gather every scrap ;  
And I would roll it in a ball  
And toss it in your lap."

---

## *The Midnight Train*

---

### THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN

THE midnight train runs upwards, far  
Beyond the spangled veil  
That night throws on the weary earth  
To hide the sun's red trail.  
She swings away on noiseless wheels,  
And in the nightly climb  
Defies the fearful realm of space  
And mocks the range of time.

The driver is my double, and  
His motive cling to mine,  
And if I wave a finger-tip  
He changes our design.  
And should I faint at dizzy heights,  
Or shrink from awful falls,  
His hand, with gentle providence,  
The wayward train recalls.

I take my seat, and in a flick  
New countries come to view,  
With purple-woven mountain tops  
And valleys shot with dew,

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

And rivers sparkling like a gem  
That traps the morning rays,  
And heavy forests where the leaves  
Have scattered sandalled ways.

The people of this pleasant land  
My willing subjects are,  
And, when I touch its rim, throng in  
A stream about my car.  
Then vying in good rivalry,  
Each on my will attends,  
And reaps the joy that service yields  
To those who wait on friends.

And would they have a pageantry  
To feast their eyes upon,  
I roll Time's screen aside, and show  
The pomp of Babylon.  
Or from the misty past revive  
The grandeur of the Nile,  
Or animate the portals of  
A Roman peristyle.

Yet all this power would count as puff,  
Were Love without a place,  
The sky would wear a widow's weeds,  
The sun be in disgrace.



---

## *The Midnight Train*

---

The laughter of the careless wind  
    Would wilter to a sigh—  
If Love abjured her royalty  
    The very flowers would die.

So lest the land be desolate,  
    The living lose its zest,  
We build a throne of human hearts  
    And set Love on its crest.  
And though as king I rule the folk  
    By virtue of my might,  
She sways their minds, like needles, with  
    The magnet of delight.

With dawning day the train descends  
    To earth's incessant care,  
But happily my nostrils hold  
    The perfume of Love's hair,  
And, like the fumes of thickened wine,  
    It lingers on the brain,  
And lulls the passing hours until  
    The train runs out again.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

THE SHEARING

THE sheep are leaping the purple rocks  
Like a cascade's tawny flow ;  
They drop in foam to the gath'ring flocks  
That flood the hurdles below.  
The tinted dews that the morn has shed  
To their tufted cassocks cling,  
As soft as down on a thistle-head,  
Or spray on a sea-bird's wing.

They come with their golden girdles set  
For the market and the price.  
A season's grass is the chargèd debt,  
And their coats the sacrifice.  
And they must pay in their public lot  
For the toil of patient years—  
For pastures kept and a brushy cot—  
To the rhyme of clinking shears.

The simple wood of the altar-piece,  
By the countless off'rings worn,  
Is choked with combs of the yellow fleece,  
And the twisted trimmings torn.

---

## *The Shearing*

---

And there they pray through the ruthless day  
By the sanguined grate and bar,  
With bitter bleat or a lonely lay,  
And the incense of the tar.

And ships sail out on a shifty trail  
With a yield that clogs their hold,  
With bonded script and the banded bale,  
Like the argonauts of old.  
The whirling wheels of the tireless looms  
And the spindle and the rack,  
Will blend new colours for fashion's blooms,  
While the shriven sheep go back.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

THE SONG OF THE SAW

To rippling hills, where the shadows break  
Through twisted bough and leaf,  
I come in the arms of the timber rake,  
As landlord to his feoff.  
The dusky boles and the crusted spires  
That mount to airy heights  
Are sweetened food for my turning tyres  
And grist for running bites.

Where forests sleep through the monthless years,  
And time is tied to days,  
I come with a set of shafted spears  
To stir the ancient ways.  
The grey gums groan as my cutter rings  
By sister trees and friends ;  
The cinctured trunk at my summons swings,  
And lofty plumage bends.

I am the lord of the cumbered ground  
Where Nature works awry ;  
Where she has builded a forest sound  
I clear for wheat and rye.

---

## *The Song of the Saw*

---

The clustered rush of the underbrush  
On fertile soil and fair,  
I cleave in twain to a moaning rush,  
And sighs of dead despair.

Through bitten channels the white sap runs  
In floods of sympathy,  
But tearful cries to the kindly suns  
Are fruitless litany.  
My dragon teeth, by the will of man,  
Must wheel and rip and tear,  
So there be space and an open plan  
For shining mould and share.

My bonded brother his length must fling  
Through rod and rod of earth,  
But he main bide on an easy swing  
Till I redeem his dearth ;  
For I must flatten the soaring pile  
And clip the hill's green brow  
Ere there be room on a treasured mile  
To turn the willing plough.

The pillared domes of the jarrah kings,  
And states where karri reigns,  
Are less avail than the mushroom rings  
That fairies weave for chains,

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

When my toothed lip is bent to the wood,  
And strength is borne to dust—  
Yet this my song is the song of good,  
And things that claim me just.

The cobwebbed threads of the railway god  
That span a continent  
Must lay their way through the levelled sod  
On carven blocks I sent;  
And ships that lift to the east and west  
Through sprayed and stormy miles,  
With shaken sides and a battered breast,  
Find harbour by my piles.

My nimble blade to a log is laid  
For swift and sure caress,  
And I will fashion and carve and braid  
The wood to tasty dress;  
And from my benches the planking rides  
In ordered suit and gait,  
To rise in tiers on the ranking sides  
Of homes that make a State.

I am the lord of the untouched wild,  
Of newly-wakened lands,  
Where there, for strength, as a newborn child,  
The human stock expands.

---

## *The Song of the Saw*

---

Yet I am held for a people's weal  
In just restraint and law,  
And so to the tune of governed steel  
I sing the song of the saw.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE LIBEL

ONE summer morning, as the hours  
Were soothed to simple idleness,  
I lay amongst the pensive flowers,  
And answered to their soft caress.

With tint and shade they gave their hues  
To shed repose upon my eyes.  
In painted lanes and avenues  
I saw their billowed splendour rise.

The East may blend her blooded gems  
In pompous shape and high design,  
And yet upon these waving stems  
Behold some fairer jewels shine.

One who was waxen in his ears,  
Whose nostrils caught no ready scent,  
Had wandered through in bygone years  
And spread opinion as he went.



---

## *The Libel*

---

The odours that around assailed  
The senses to delicious state,  
For him no pleasant nosegay hailed,  
No woodbine climbing by a gate.

Australia's flowers were stark and stern,  
Their colours ran without a heart.  
I wonder if he smelt the fern  
When she uncoiled her plumaged art.

The incense of the wattle boughs  
Dropt heavily on grass and leaf,  
And yet he walked with threaded brows,  
Whose porting nose brought no relief.

Perhaps the flavour of the gum,  
That pushed abroad her honeyed spray,  
By magic wrought his senses dumb  
Until he woke and went away.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE SONG OF THE FIRST PARADE

FIVE score, all told, of Australian breed,  
    We stand in a nervous row ;  
Some have the strain of an English sire,  
Some are crossed with an Arab's fire,  
Some are brumbies, with no desire  
    Save the tread of a canter slow,  
And a groping nose in the evening feed.

But, common or gentle, all are one  
    When we face the Maxim's voice ;  
The pellets that rattle about the ranks  
    Have no particular choice.  
A bullet will cripple a thoroughbred  
    As soon as the sorriest moke,  
And the claims of exclusive birth are lost  
    In the riotous battle smoke.

Our hearts are beating at double rate,  
    And swelling our throbbing veins ;  
Our muscles ripple from head to heel  
Like heat-waves running through tempered steel—  
Our necks are tossed in a short appeal  
    For a loosened curb and reins,  
And a challenge to carry our weight.

---

## *The Song of the First Parade*

---

The blood of a brother calls our blood  
From the distant battle plain ;  
And shall we wait at the outer gate  
Till the signal rings again ?  
Though the Horse of Death, with the fire-lit eyes,  
Should hover about our track,  
When the summons comes from our stricken kin  
Shall we of the breed hang back ?

We have cropped our toll of the winter grass  
In the thick of the underbrush ;  
We have galloped out at the break of day  
In circling lines, like the foals at play ;  
We have dozed awhile when the paddocks lay  
Asleep in the noonday hush,  
And the sky was as polished brass.

But the word has come from across the sea,  
Our work is near at hand ;  
And we must fight as our fathers fought,  
By the token of our brand. !  
And we must cover the reddened plain,  
And creep through dusty kloofs,  
Where some at the close of a fighting day  
May lie with upturned hoofs.

Our feet are tuned to the daily drill,  
And our ears to the bugle calls ;

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

We have trampled grooves in the shifting sand  
As we stood in wait on the bit's demand—  
And now we are ready to prove our brand,  
    In the face of buttressed walls,  
Though our fortune be good or be ill.

Our girths are taut and our cruppers slack,  
    Our stirrups hang to swing;  
We pick our steps with a steady gait  
    To the bit's melodious ring.  
We must sail away on a nearing day  
    With a score of ten times ten,  
And who can level a taunt at us,  
    When we carry a hundred men?

---

## *Mafeking*

---

### MAFEKING

No ramparts screened thy market-place from shot ;  
No battlements defied the shrieking shell  
That split the air with thunder as it fell ;  
No grim redoubt winked lightning through a slot ;  
No masonry, close laid with secret trowel,  
Showed stern, unbending features to the foes ;  
What held thee safe amidst incessant blows ?  
A line of sturdy men—and Baden Powell.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

THE WHITE BATS

WHERE the grey-lipped ranges mouth the sky,  
A dozen miles from the sea,  
And the red-veined rocks are shoulder high  
In a tide of greenery ;  
Five score or more of the white-winged bats  
Were filed like an ordered host,  
With their singing strings and slanting slats,  
On the New Man's circling coast.

A word was passed through the trembling air,  
On the lightning's fevered flight,  
Of shoals of sharks from a distant lair  
To harry the New Man's bight ;  
And a bat awoke from oily sleep  
To the buzzing engine's hum,  
To tightened stays and a lofty leap,  
And a thousand feet of plumb.

A wash of cloud on a blackened streak  
Grew clear on the purple line,  
And an untoothed gape beneath the reek  
Spoke once of a swift design.

---

## *The White Bats*

---

The bat recoiled on his pinioned way  
For a longing look and wide,  
While a prayer slipped up through opened day  
To God, from the man inside.

As an eagle takes the downward dip  
To the quarry's shifting bait,  
The white bat dropped to the foremost ship,  
With a bridled bomb as freight.  
The grey shark shivered from tower to keel  
As she haunched upon her race,  
While a man spake low beside a wheel,  
And the shark was cleared for space.

The deadly tubes to their ranges swung,  
With an eye unblinked and fast;  
They tracked the bat as he lightly hung  
Ashake for a finished cast.  
Then they roared aloud in ruddy rage  
Through a clouded smoke and flame,  
And a man went down in a crumpled cage,  
But he left a hero's name.

The ranges stirred like a field of down,  
And the bats came out by threes;  
What consequence that a twain should drown,  
So the third sang victories?

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

And there was skill and a cunning flight  
To sport with the spitting shot—  
Our fathers stormed in a sterner fight  
For a prize of lesser lot.

So three went round on a swooping raid  
Where the furnace scattered sparks,  
And three more ran to a higher grade  
On the line of angry sharks.  
Then one was winged, and his tilted planes  
Were the playthings of the sky,  
To flap and flutter the airy lanes,  
While the smoke-wreaths drifted by.

And one dissolved like a fading flower  
When the breath of summer passed,  
As the grey shark spread a leaden shower  
Aloft on a crimson blast.  
But the third he laughed to scorn all doubt,  
As he slipped his cunning shell,  
And a steel colossus splintered out  
In the instant throes of hell.

There have been fights, and there fights will be,  
When the passions rise to foam,  
For a free man's right to liberty,  
And the priceless peace of home.



---

## *The White Bats*

---

But the New Man's coast, so long serene,  
Was flushed to its furthest tips  
When the threefold bats, with honour clean,  
Bore down on the pirate ships.

Three pairs of wings to a bulge of steel,  
Three men to the host below,  
But the Lord who steadied the New Man's keel,  
On the corsair laid his bow ;  
And we, who waited with bated breath,  
Sang the lays of ancient Rome,  
As the last lean shark was done to death,  
And the last white bat flew home.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE WHITE ARMADA

THE stars shone out at the fore-head, the stripes were  
flung behind,  
And over the clinging waters floated an equal mind.  
Blood of the blood that ventured where new-found lands  
lay bare  
Brings to a distant brother the rights of a brother's  
share.  
Guard of the long Pacific, from wave-wrung shore to  
shore,  
Stand not here on the threshold—we tender the open  
door.

Our father's swords have measured, our father's blood  
has run,  
That we might meet in kinship beneath a friendly  
sun.  
They wrought their dreams of freedom on lonely brush  
and plain,  
And by our lighted haven we hold their strife a gain.  
The years have brought endeavour, the ties have closed  
to hand ;  
And, bound by crimson cincture, the Great White people  
stand.

---

## *The White Armada*

---

The hearths that warmed your cradle are hearths that  
saw our birth ;  
Their fires are newly kindled from end to end of  
earth ;  
And where their flames leap skyward, or where their  
ashes glow,  
Along the reeking tropics, or 'neath incessant snow,  
They hold for warmth of welcome away from view or  
creed—  
To join in jubilation, or serve a waiting need.

Yet took we pledge for living, yet took we power on  
lease,  
That by our ancient landmarks we forge the keys of  
peace.  
Where tumult shook a nation, and justice turned  
aside,  
The vows we owned in simple were vows for which we  
died.  
For righteousness and honour, on us the Master's  
will ;  
And wherefore met in danger we keep the promise  
still.

Now, as we greet each other, on the White Man's  
southern rim,  
Unbind the gear of travel and loose the girded  
limb.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

Abide in our tents a little, while heart speaks out to  
heart,

To sweeten the swelling distance that tears our ways  
apart.

Eat and drink and be merry till the old-time signal,  
when

The fluttering bunting whispers, "God speed till we  
meet again."

---

## *The Titanic*

---

### THE TITANIC

ARREST thy bold, usurping hand, oh, man !  
Curb the high fervour and ambitious plan ;  
For it is written in the sacred lore,  
Thus far thy suit shall venture and no more.  
Not all the majesty of bulwarked steel  
That rides so proudly on the thrusting keel,  
And calmly bends the heaving wash to spray—  
Not this magnificence and pomp shall stay  
By one limp hair the mode of destiny.  
The fate which sends to-day a careless sea,  
In motion easy, with becoming wave,  
To-morrow in red anger plots a grave ;  
And all the beaconed ways of human thought  
With sobs and sighs to nothingness are brought ;  
They who had played in dreams where conquest led  
Now call upon the ocean for their dead.

In the old ages which are rot and rust  
Men builded pyramids against the dust,  
This newer season breeds a floating pile  
That dwarfs the solemn grandeur of the Nile ;  
And yet this triumph, this expanded show,  
Sinks with ripped shoulders by a sleeping foe.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

Not all the cultivated art and craft  
Could make her surer than a simple raft,  
In that black moment when the gilded world  
Against the cracking elements was hurled.  
What was the bulky enterprise, the pride  
Of rich achievements, when two thousand died?  
Two thousand souls that entered on their death  
In the slow passing of an infant's breath!  
The scornful sea tots these upon her roll,  
And bleeds the nation that has claimed control.

---

## *Sis McCann*

---

### SIS McCANN

HERE will I write you a story—  
The story of Sis McCann,  
Who, wreathed in a woman's glory,  
Wanted to capture a man.

Sis with her five-eleven,  
Sturdy of shoulders and hips—  
The taste of a seventh heaven  
Lay in her dewy lips.

And her eyes shone out in laughter,  
Like twinkling stars in mist,  
As she beckoned the suitors after  
With a turn of her rounded wrist.

Her smile was a thing of wonder,  
Suffusing, like dawn, her face,  
When the light beats up from under  
And hallows the sky with grace.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

Born to the skirt and saddle,  
She rode like a gay hussar ;  
The gallant who came astraddle  
Followed her shoe-lights afar.

Sis was no gossamer fairy,  
Swathed in a moonlit sheen ;  
She ran the sty and the dairy  
Like a double-coupled machine.

And the fashion she ruled the cattle  
Drew boasts from old McCann ;  
He swore by the gods of battle  
That Sis gave points to a man.

When the burnished pails were rippling  
With the milk-yard's fleecy flow,  
The oldest hand and the stripling  
To the skill of Sis bent low.

And the lovers who leant on fences,  
Where shade was a change unique,  
Drew breath at the consequences  
Of ruffling her downy cheek.

The hearts that burnt like tinder  
To win a delinquent kiss  
Were charred to a lifeless cinder  
Before the glance of Sis.



---

## *Sis McCann*

---

Big Jim Moore, the drover,  
    Ventured a word, and fled ;  
While handsome Harry, the rover,  
    The ringer of every shed,

Whose challenge rang in the dawning  
    Like the crow of chanticleer,  
Shrank, like a mastiff fawning  
    At the feet of a lord severe.

And the colts, as yet unbroken,  
    Who followed their heroes' lead,  
Sat with the word unspoken,  
    Shamed at the undone deed.

Then into the bashful meeting,  
    Minted fresh from town,  
Came with a gusty greeting  
    Cyril Montgomery Brown.

We all had a sense of loathing  
    For this gilded city sprat,  
With his mathematical clothing,  
    And his unromantic hat.

We knew the way of the bush-land,  
    By night or day to ride,  
But he broke us out with his push-land  
    Manner of snaring a bride.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

While we of the wool and horsehair  
    Stood awed before the prize,  
He came like an old-time corsair  
    And took her before our eyes.

Now the boys are bereft of senses,  
    And broken in divers parts,  
And the rails of McCann's old fences  
    Are strung with shattered hearts.

And the milk in the dairy curdles  
    At the thought of Sis McCann,  
Who topped with a cheer the hurdles,  
    Caught by a city man.

But I am alone in pursuing  
    A grim philosophy,  
For Sis in her strenuous wooing  
    Never cast eyes at me.

---

## *The Spinners*

---

### THE SPINNERS

THERE was a barque set sail one day,  
By hungry gulf and grinning bay,  
To seek an island far away,  
Where dwelt the spirit of content.  
Gay rovers these who swung the ropes  
Adown the masthead's dizzy slopes,  
And filled were they with faiths and hopes  
That set the gods in wonderment.

Somewhere across the blue-robed sea,  
Where wind and wave leagued sympathy,  
Beneath an aged and wondrous tree,  
Their island lay upon the charts.  
So steered they north and steered they south  
And steered they east, until a drouth  
That cracked the motions of the mouth  
Laid heavy burden on their hearts.

Then "hi," they said, and "ho," they said,  
And jibed against the western red—  
"What is content if we are dead?"  
And swung the mighty tiller round.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

In fruitless winds and aimless seas,  
In shifty joints and quaking knees,  
In spectre rocks and ghostly quays,  
Content was lost to sight and sound.

Then four points north and four points west  
They laid their keel across the breast  
Of one confiding wave, whose crest,  
With foamy promise, bade them on.  
They ran by headlands where the night  
Is blistered with excited light  
To stretches on a long-drawn bight,  
But there content had breathed and gone.

Then one read from an ancient rune  
Of flaky pathways of the moon  
That beckoned to a still lagoon,  
Whose brow was fanned by preening palms.  
So on the tropic's languid line,  
Where newborn days are drowsed in wine,  
Their bowsprit headed for the sign  
Until it droned beneath the calms.

And now the sea was slack and spent,  
All listless were the stays they bent,  
And in a haze their sweet content  
Diffused her life and lost her soul.

---

## *The Spinners*

---

Then whistled they by stem and stern  
For chancy winds from Indra's urn,  
One zephyr lost, with whose return  
    Their ship might join in eager roll.

The surly fates who wield the flail  
On stubborn heart or spirit frail,  
In cynic humour blew a gale  
    That rent the canvas into shreds;  
And they were left with barren poles  
To pierce the pathway of the shoals,  
While Neptune rough exacted tolls,  
    And laid hard bargains on their heads.

But patience watched behind her cuff;  
She laid her smooth hand on the rough,  
And ere the fates had cried enough  
    The waves were beacons with a buoy.  
And as the broken clouds' grey bank  
In tumbled pieces slowly sank,  
They filled their flagons and they drank  
    To eke the measure of their joy.

Then followed they a grimy track  
Behind a mammoth steamships wrack—  
One thousand leagues to there and back—  
    And pressed upon a city's hives.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

There lines were laid, and ways were made,  
And things were said that men obeyed,  
And God was trusted with a trade,  
    But poor content was barred their lives.

They laid the city by their heel,  
And slunk away on trembling keel,  
While dolphins in excessive zeal  
    Ploughed snowy furrows as a guide.  
Then northwards with the albatross,  
Whose easy pinions swing across  
The sloping seas, or pitch and toss,  
    They wrestled with a heaving tide ;

And drifted on by flinty flocs  
Whose caps are crowned with crimson snows  
That shed their colours, as the rose  
    Drops petals, to the dying sun ;  
Till in the icy kingdom vast  
Some careless demon loosed a blast,  
And they were left with splintered mast  
    To make the aching homeward run.

And so these rovers, once so gay,  
Crept silently through sunsets grey,  
By naked gulf and empty bay,  
    On listless seas devoid of foam ;

---

## *The Spinners*

---

Yet as one losing in a race  
Trims his demeanour with good grace,  
So firmness settled on their face,  
    And sturdy eyes looked out to home.

With ribboned sheets and trysail torn,  
And tattered tops and stays forlorn,  
Well might they wait the shower of scorn  
    That greets the beaten and the sore ;  
But as when souls are lowest down  
They higher spring to reach the crown—  
This be their trophy and renown,  
    Content was hailing from the shore.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

RECIPE

TAKE a soul of childhood,  
Verdant in the bloom,  
Loose it on its wildhood,  
Innocent of doom.

Paint its wings with pleasure,  
Colour all its days,  
Yield it fullest measure,  
Widen all its ways.

Break the spiny bramble,  
Cull the glowing flowers,  
Scatter for a scramble  
Contumacious hours.

Let the franchised bubble  
Shed its gaudy hues,  
While the ghost of trouble  
Lags in cloggèd shoes.



---

## *Recipe*

---

In the giddy dances,  
    Courting passion shy,  
Pour inviting glances  
    From a liquid eye.

Rear a fairy palace,  
    Streaked with living lines,  
Crown it with a chalice  
    For ambrosial wines.

Let the pageant splendid  
    Crimson more and more,  
Till the dream is ended,  
    And the soul is sore.

Then with salt of sorrow,  
    Bittered nine times nine,  
On a bleak to-morrow,  
    Steep the soul in brine.

With a pungent acid,  
    Biting like a flash,  
Paint the fibres placid  
    Till they waste in ash.

Where the flame impinges  
    On the ruddy steel,  
Lay the dainty fringes  
    Till the bones reveal.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

Pass the shaking tissue  
Through a pointed rack,  
Let the bleeding issue  
Welter in a sack.

Lest the soul should languish  
Under terror's strain,  
Turn the cup of anguish  
Swiftly on the drain.

Sift the broken pieces  
Through a slender mesh,  
Work alone releases  
Sp̄rit from the flesh.

After washings seven,  
If you find a trace,  
To the Lord of Heaven  
Offer it with grace.

---

## *Sea-Fingers*

---

### SEA-FINGERS

WAVING sea-fingers, encircled with foam,  
What do you gather to-day in your comb?

Where have you probed in the deep, in the deep,  
Mattressed with ooze for eternity's sleep?

Say, have you shaken the withering bones  
Down in the pools of the nethermost zones?

What do you bring from the limpid lagoon,  
Pearl-shine and shimmer that dropt from the moon?

Where is the chaplet you stole from the snows,  
Crusted and clinging to fugitive floes?

Where are the banners you bore on your breast,  
Blithely to battle the winds of the west?

What is your purpose, oh, magical sea,  
Will you not render your riddle to me?

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

Stay in your answer, for this I have seen,  
You are but children, as children have been.

Weaving a garland of feathery froth,  
Boiling a cauldron of slippery broth.

Stirring and straining the sun-bitten rocks,  
Chafing the slumbering wood of the docks.

Shaping and making with tremulous hands  
Cities and castles in quivering sands.

Twisting the seaweed in bibulous rolls,  
Whetting the jaws of the treacherous shoals.

Herdng the timorous shells on the beach,  
Lowing and cooling in purposeless speech.'

Tossing the rivetted monsters of steel,  
Groaning and shaking from transome to keel.

Petulant, tearing the weary old earth,  
Generous, weaving a nest for re-birth.

Teasing to anger the riotous blast,  
Laughing its passion to scorn as it passed.

Tempting with promise the weathering clouds,  
Creeping, like monks, in voluminous shrouds.

---

## *Sea-Fingers*

---

Daring the sun and its opulent heat,  
Soothing the night with your rythmical beat.

Waving sea-fingers, illumined with spray,  
Who shall decide on your mission to-day

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

A SLIP

AN angel watching the depths of Hell,  
Dropt a tear for the lost and lone;  
The devil winked as the tear-drop fell,  
And the tear was turned to stone.

But the Lord God guarded the stricken gem,  
As it slipped through the fiery whirl,  
And ere it had touched the earth's blue hem  
He had changed it into a pearl.

---

## *The Lake of Tears*

---

### THE LAKE OF TEARS

ON a blackened isle in a lightless sea  
Lies the lake of woman's tears,  
And fringed it is with a salty froth,  
And the broken heads of Ashtaroth ;  
And the air is charged with fears  
That creep like ghosts on the sightless sea.

By the further shore, where the stabbing stones  
Lay threats on the moaning wave,  
The winds have bitten the hapless rocks,  
And sculpt and scuttled the drowsy blocks  
To a great and hollow cave,  
Where the witches are and the gabbling crones.

By day or night, with a frightened splash,  
The tears of the world run down ;  
They furrow and fret the ancient wall,  
And drop and drip to a feeble fall,  
Like the lives that weakly drown,  
And their trail is set with a whitened ash.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

The strings and reeds of the leafy choir  
That mellow the ways of earth  
Are barren here and are hushed and low,  
While minor keys sing a note of woe,  
Like cries of a child at birth,  
Or a childish wail for a brief desire.

The devil he looses a nameless wind  
If a star-head comes to light;  
The deathly reek of his pitchy pit,  
Where the sulphur writhes in seething spit,  
On the pale flame lays a blight,  
And the blazes sway like the aimless blind.

On the thickened bed of the smoking gloom  
The child of the world is born;  
And tears of a mother's anguish drain  
As the softened shower of filtered rain  
When a cloud's white breast is torn—  
And a man is staked for the choking tomb.

Not a soul is sped on its curving bent  
To grow and fatten and fall,  
But the string is loosed to woman's sobs,  
And the shaft is spurred by woman's throbs,  
While the distance takes her call,  
And the prayers and the hopes she, serving, sent.



---

## *The Lake of Tears*

---

To a man it comes in the ache of years  
With the numbing shock of truth,  
That never a thought or word of good  
But drew its birth from the womanhood,  
That helmed the vessel of youth  
On the lonely lake of a woman's tears.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

CHRISTMAS

THE jewelled sun of summer blazes high ;  
The loyal earth yields incense to his rays ;  
And in the tread of the abundant days  
Old Christmas comes, to chide the furtive sigh.  
No timid visitant is he, nor shy,  
But heralded in lusty songs of praise ;  
And mirth and gladness line his many ways,  
And chase the shades of care from ev'ry eye.

Be of good cheer ; the terms ye spent in grief  
Are fallen like the worn and withered leaf.  
Old stems re-bud beneath a kindly sun,  
And with the blessed dews dry courses run.  
Let bitternesses die ; clip Mem'ry's wings,  
And look to radiant Hope for brighter things.

---

## *The Old King*

---

### THE OLD KING

MIDST doubts and fears, and after Fate's delays,  
He wore the Crown of Empire in our lands,  
And took the burden that the Crown demands,  
Though ruthless Time had multiplied his days.  
To stand his people's counsellor; their ways  
To shape; to hold their love in silken bands  
Alone: with this high office in his hands  
He strove, and left it with a nation's praise.

Through troubled seas he held the helm of State,  
Serene, and conscious of the course to steer,  
Until the Master bade the journey cease,  
And called the pilot to the inner gate.  
With reverence we lay upon his bier  
That which he bore in life, the wreath of peace.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

SEDDON

For him are done the days of light,  
The sunlit glow of mortal life,  
And in the darkness of the night  
He rests, a hero, after strife.

He wore no chaplet on his brow,  
Nor tinsel cut to measures vain—  
His crest, maybe, the humble plough,  
His shield the cultivated plain.

No party mind was his; all men  
Were brethren in the sight of God;  
No fashion came within his ken  
To mark the courtier from the clod.

Forewarned, he saw the future rise,  
With toleration in the van;  
And, with prescience in his eyes,  
He mapped his wide and broad'ning plan.

---

## *Seddon*

---

Nor stayed he in the narrow ways  
That chain the soul to single lines ;  
His vision sought the nobler phase  
Of wise Imperial designs :

That kindred might be kindred still,  
With league and league of wave between ;  
And in their brotherhood fulfil  
The promise of the days serene.

Too soon ambition's gate has closed,  
While yet was work for sturdy hearts ;  
The captain's voyage, self-imposed,  
Must be maintained on other charts.

Some other back must hold the cross,  
And bear it through the troubled years ;  
So as New Zealand mourns her loss,  
Inclined Australia blends her tears.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE STAR

THE first-born night, in mourning gloom arrayed,  
Slipt from the portals of her dead lord's gate,  
While he, cloud-curtained, in the west was laid  
By shudd'ring breezes to his last estate.  
The spirit drew her softly to the throne,  
As wide her clinging draperies were spread,  
And sate her, hushed in sorrow and alone,  
With melancholy moons about her head.  
The wistful stars, in clustered sympathy,  
With twinkling emblems lit the darkened way,  
And crooned a song of other days to be,  
And promise, breaking from the lifeless grey.  
Forth from the host she plucked one shining light,  
Poised for a moment to the earth's dim slope,  
As one who marks a missile's certain flight,  
Then kindly kissed and loosed the star of hope.

In crumbled time this was the star  
That glowed on Bethlehem,  
When Magi, from Chaldea far,  
Brought myrrh and spice and gem.

---

## *The Star*

---

It blazed upon the crimson page  
Of grim Crusader's quests,  
And lit with chivalry the rage  
Of their impassioned breasts.

Upon the furthest western sky  
In faintest haze it shone,  
A beacon to the anxious eye,  
And drew Columbus on.

The pale poles caught its cheerful glance  
Amidst their thickened snows,  
And, warmed with flush of new romance,  
Foreswore their cold repose.

The eyeless deserts felt its gleam,  
And held their choking sighs:  
Beneath its radiance their dream  
In fruit would surely rise.

Where thrusting pennants pierced the hush  
Of nature's nursery,  
The star, upon the lonely brush,  
Laid wondrous filagree.

And silent men who drove the share  
By lease of Adam's curse,  
Renewed their faith, with pluck to spare,  
When seasons were averse.

---

*By Suns and Stars*

---

Though doubt may prick the feet of zeal,  
Like briar's on the way,  
And fate may tap the shieldless heel,  
The star still burns to-day.



---

## *The Goddess*

---

### THE GODDESS

You came, my love, upon the luring morn,  
When the soft grass was bearded with gay fire,  
When richest melodies and songs were born,  
To flame the rapture of sublime desire.  
Pale as a penitent before the stool,  
I waited meekly for your kindly grace,  
As the secluded and becoming pool,  
Expectant lies before the sun's embrace.  
But in the crowded torrent of high praise  
My lowly off'rings only lived to die.  
You rode, triumphant, on the thronging days,  
And in the clamour rudely passed me by.

We met again within a shifting street,  
Where the vain gods of fashion soured the heart,  
And envy bred the critics and their meat.  
I thought you then, majestic and apart,  
Would surely break the cordage of display,  
Slice the false tinsel, shred the clotted tape,  
Stoop with demeanour from your lofty way,  
And clothe your wonder in a kindly shape.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

But as a shiv'ring bubble blindly snaps  
Beneath the weight of glories laid upon,  
So broke my golden vision in mishaps,  
And while I bowed in sorrow you were gone.

Once more I saw you where the breasted  
ships

Slide up and down upon the ocean's curls,  
When Venus gave you carmine shells for lips,  
And shone your body with her lustrous pearls.  
The shimmer of the wave was in your eyes,  
And dainty saltiness lay on your hair,  
As if all nature in glad enterprise  
Had sought to perfect you beyond compare.  
But, as I beckoned, mournful mists arose,  
And a bleak fog blew over all my view ;  
The vapours curdled and the picture froze,  
And all the rolling world was closed on you.

Yet this I have against the hand of death  
When he, inopportune, arrives to slay,  
By compress of the heart and clogging breath,  
That when I venture on his crumbled clay,  
Where the thrown shell is heaped beside the  
pit ;

There in the centre of the thing unknown,  
Whose habitation is by lamp unlit,  
Your presence in the veiled and shrouded throne,

---

## *The Goddess*

---

To the wild hymn of cymbal and of drum,  
Will purge the misery of frantic years,  
Render a pathway to the light, and come  
As tenderly as music on vexed ears.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE CONQUEROR

Now is he strengthened by the Lord's good will,  
With lucid plan, and service to fulfil.  
Clear as a landscape set in crystal air  
He saw the burden of all living and his share.  
The pedalled ways that dusty feet had worn  
Before the glances of audacious scorn  
Were thickened with moist greenness, by which aid  
His steps were tempered and his progress made.  
Where sick and troubled clouds disturbed the sky  
Sweet stretches of soft azure found the eye.  
Men who had bulked at him before the test  
Shrank to the level of his filling chest.  
The fears that fancy drew upon the screen  
In the impatient hours that forked between  
The horror and the ardour of his days  
Dissolved like snow before a crimson blaze.  
The laggard and weak-jointed steps of doubt  
With high commission sought new places out,  
By widened plateaux, where the reckless east  
On sky and water flung a rainbow feast,  
Or sandy slopes, that caught the ocean's tears,  
As the keen sickle takes the golden ears:  
These were his kingdoms, carpeted and clean,  
And by his valiant self he reigned serene.

---

## *The Conqueror*

---

So this old miracle was wrought afresh  
On tampered spirit and unhonoured flesh ;  
He who had knelt to circumstance and prayed,  
When the palm-wreath upon the sword was laid ;  
Who in the whirlwind of the Furies' rage,  
With blanching marrow, threw aside his gage ;  
Unloosed the strings that held him in his place,  
And watched his thin endeavour slip in space ;  
Misread the trumpet charge for the retreat,  
Or like the weakling, who, on feeble feet,  
To move his shallow functions to their use,  
Prides the pale purpose with a pleasant juice,  
Broke into fruitless clamour, till the sigh  
Of some despairing portent sapped his eye ;  
He who had tottered, selfless, limp, and sore,  
While God's divinity lay in his core—  
That subtle ravelling of cell and bone—  
In the supremest hour came to his own ;  
Came with the stealthy vigil of the night  
In lengthened hours that droop before the light ;  
And as the dawn her amber flame uncurled  
Shook a fierce negative against the world,  
Rebuilt the broken pieces of his whole,  
Fought with the universe and won his soul.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### HIS RIGHT

To march with bosom forward to the wind,  
To shout the exaltation of his mind ;  
Attempt the pinnacle where new airs blow  
Their thrilling vapour from unsullied snow ;  
Drink with the dews and roister in the rains ;  
Hail the warm dawning with unsheltered brains ;  
Lie with loose limb beneath the languid wave  
That filtered with slow pulse from Heaven's nave  
Play with the stars, as children on the sands  
With shining stones in lines create new lands,  
Or droop with shaken muscles as the night  
Draws in her velvet strings—this was his right.

There was no interdict on public place—  
Who ventured boldly stared in fortune's face—  
And merit in fresh circumstances drew  
The inspiration for a plunge anew.  
Where clustered toil in energy was bent,  
From that strained bow his shooting arrow went.  
The fruitful plough that laves the earth with grain  
With ev'ry fattened furrow was his gain.

---

## *His Right*

---

All ways were free that to advancement led,  
The line was clear from capitol to shed ;  
All that earth succoured in her swollen breast  
Was his rich baggage on the lively quest.

Yet with restraint, for sober was his suit—  
The pruned tree ripens with the richest fruit.  
All action that expanded thought dictates  
Must pass the icy judgment of the fates.  
He who would sit on stately seat and rule,  
By obligation faces first the school.  
With this reserve his effort swam on wings  
Along the widened plane of greater things.  
On curving tiers he took his happy rise,  
And each ascension gave him clearer eyes  
And rounder outlook and decision swift—  
This and much more was our Australia's gift.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE ROSE

OLD Adam, dying in the ev'ning sun,  
Prayed for a rose: an angel brought him one,  
And as upon his nostrils fell its spice—  
The ling'ring essence of lost Paradise—  
A sun-shower of quick tears bedewed his eyes,  
The calloused scales of barren enterprise  
Sloughed from his hands; the sore and stricken  
    joint  
With wondrous healing unguent was anoint;  
A sanguine current rang his languid thews  
To sturdy action, as the balmy dews  
Make deserts strive with nature for re-birth,  
And in that struggle animate the earth.

Time-burdened though his eyes were, he could  
    see  
This was the gift, the flower of sympathy;  
The salvaged hope of heaven, from whose store  
Keen justice banned his kind for evermore;  
A budding clue, with which he might essay  
The passage of the labyrinthine way,



---

## *The Rose*

---

And from this sorry desolation save  
His stock for that sweet garden's scented pave  
Where once he trod with shoulders to the sun,  
When comely hope her scarlet message spun  
Unto the waiting life, and bade him rule  
All moving things from mountain-top to pool.

Now, waiting for the thrilling hour of doom  
That ruptures all the secrets of the tomb;  
With flesh inert and muscles steeped in peace,  
Before the awful travail of release,  
Yet burnished in his mind, he saw aright  
The friendly signs, as beacons in the night.  
The Sphynx's frozen lips with words were thrilled,  
The Oracle's dumb cave with song was filled,  
The depths, responsive, struck a mighty chord  
Whose echoes bridged the Styx's darkened ford,  
And unseen choirs in boundless harmony,  
Proclaimed on earth the birth of sympathy.

Low in the west a slender crescent lay  
To mark the passing of this direful day,  
But on the tips, in widened circle flung,  
A misty prophecy of greatness hung.  
Through breeding hours the master hand of time  
Would paint her canvas in a light sublime,  
Until her ringed effulgence beat the sky  
With flasting flails, and starry dust blew high;

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

But ere she won and dressed her noble part  
She must descend and crucify her heart;  
And as she dipped, old Adam's soul went  
    out,  
And with it passed the grisly ghost of doubt.

His limp hand spilled the petals of the rose  
In carmine shells, where dewy pearls repose,  
And prowling winds, like vagrant things of  
    prey,

Lipped at the stems and bore the blooms away.  
These airy mantles of the world's bare breast,  
Whose wings her broken lineaments caressed,  
Though heavy with their scintillating load,  
By moaning seas and lonely landscapes rode,  
And in their flight where'er was heard the cry  
Of anguish, or the sound of doleful sigh,  
Down-dropped with softness as of snow, a leaf  
In curling tenderness to soothe the grief.

And where the symbol fell, on stone or loam,  
The tree of sympathy was rooted home,  
And blossoms, thick as bees at Autumn's store,  
The fondling branches with small effort bore.  
Their incense ran about the naked lands  
And joined in friendliness the fighting hands;  
The shrinking meek were robust at its blow,  
And vigorous ambition stirred the low.

---

## *The Rose*

---

The bony mask of human countenance  
Went clear and limpid to a kindly glance;  
And as a sun-shaft clears a secret wood,  
So with these favours all men understood.

THE SHRINE

I BUILT a shrine of wood and comely things,  
Reaped from the ranges where the magpie sings,  
With fairy strands from Nature's nightly loom,  
And captivating colours on the bloom.  
The dawning buds, with promise in each line,  
Here in my temple wrought their full design.  
The thorny mansions of the birds, whose bills  
With just precision laid the certain sills,  
Made for me domes to crown my faithful pile.  
The bush's sun-browned off'rings paved the aisle  
And hushed the hasty step, while virgin leaves  
Threw mullioned tracery upon the eaves.

There were soft things that shyly came about,  
With twitching coats and restive eyes of doubt,  
When the black cape of night fell from the sky  
And brushed the earth's domain with sable dye.  
To these I gave no sign but sympathy,  
With fingers crook'd and motions mild and free,  
And each by friendly nibble or sly pace  
Crept to the transept of my holy place.

---

## *The Shrine*

---

No music fiddling on a silver lyre  
Broke lofty anthems from an unseen choir,  
But smooth communion in this sainted keep  
Kept vigil through the stagnant hours of sleep.

When the young morn, with pink apologies,  
Clambers the hills that hold the breaking seas,  
My vestry captures all her glowing gaze,  
And brings her, penitent, with drooping rays.  
In the broad shields of ribbed and roughened  
bark

Her rushing arrows fail to find a mark.  
The white-flamed billows that her legion rolls  
Stop, spent and scathed, before the blackened  
holes.

Her flashing mirror, shattered by the boughs,  
In silver splinters falls upon my brows.  
As faint she lies, the curling tendrils bend,  
And nurse her fleeting beauty to the end.

There were recesses where the writhing soul  
Uncurled its agonies, and langour stole  
Upon the fretted heart; where the sick life  
Was washed and balmed and girded for new strife.  
Here lay the barren purpose as it died,  
The spoilt endeavour and the bitten pride,  
The clouded promise and the frosted view,  
Great principles debased and set askew.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

In these still chambers were the knotted strings  
Of Fate's gay frolics, and her careless stings.  
Here where poor hope was tainted with red rust,  
All things that move us joined the common dust.

Then on one day the sky was smoked with  
cloud,

While loosened thunders growled their rage aloud;  
The tempest shook the masses of her mane,  
Like a bathed hound, and beat the air with rain  
And from this wrath, in dread accomplishment,  
Inflamed and swift, a shaft of lightning went.  
The Lord upon my workings laid the price  
He called in blood for Abram's sacrifice.  
By one grey puff, with sulphur in its train,  
My artifice and pride was rent in twain.  
All my inventions, all my bulwarked sum,  
Levanted in a flash, and I was dumb.

Cinder and ash my relics were, and grief  
That pawed to stony heaven for relief,  
Till from a nestling spark new ardour rose,  
Plumed and triumphant, as the phœnix grows,  
And, planing to long heights where wisdom stood,  
Looked at the world and saw the world was  
good.

If purpose freezes, if the sword of fate  
Slices our threads and overthrows our state,

---

## *The Shrine*

---

By fault redeemed and error turned in true  
We shall achieve the stairway to the blue.  
Break into action, let each past regret  
Teach us to work, and in that work forget.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE GATE

Two solemn columns held a mesh of rail,  
With figures interwoven round a grail,  
And strange embellishments of curve and line  
That brewed new sauce for fancy's bread and wine.  
Here was a tracery of subtle thought  
In web, and there some mystic wonder wrought  
In gloomy pediments, like hanging brows  
That, waiting heavily upon the brain, arouse  
The senses to possession and the zest  
Of tickled action and sublime unrest.  
All that men drew from their enriched estate  
Was pictured here upon this single gate.

The virginal beginning of the vine  
In trustful tendril framed the great design,  
And fattened sheaves with drooping golden ears  
Leant on the fleecy harvest of the shears.  
The music of the magpie's morning note,  
Warm with the fever of his joyful throat,  
On bar and space within the gateway hung  
In threaded harmonies of mouth and tongue;



---

## *The Gate*

---

And stately images each side were set  
To bear with dignity the coronet,  
Fluxed with the rarest treasures of the earth,  
That crowned the sharp and tortured ways of worth.

This was the gate where each man's enterprise  
On sweated stone and metal might arise.  
There was no disarray of incident ;  
All things conspiring to completeness bent.  
The tinselled trinkets and the ribboned shows  
That we aspire to hung in gaudy rows,  
Yet to express the universal sense  
The portal bloomed with buds of innocence.  
The delicate illusion of high art  
With touch assured was woven in each part.  
So much displayed, so further much to see,  
It was at once a truth and mystery.

Men thought a field of plenty lay beyond,  
With starched and even forest and smooth pond.  
There should be sleepful parks and shaded lawns  
To mock the rainbow pennons of the dawns,  
And places of contentment, where the rush  
Of all our restless movement fell to hush ;  
Sly ingles, or, maybe, a shrouded couch  
Whereby the meeker works of Nature crouch ;  
Some pleasant playground, where our furtive dreams  
Grow into substance and fulfil their schemes ;  
Some gentleness and pity so sublime  
That one weak tear would solve the salts of time.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

This was no mortal gate, though some have sworn  
By the red crucifix and bleeding thorn  
That on this track the light of knowledge glowed  
As the full sun upon an open road;  
That whoso passed the gate with faith in hand  
Trode on a heritage of God-willed land.  
Those who had galloped in the pleasant days  
Here with clean pardon could abjure their ways.  
The spirit of good trust, with cheerful song,  
Scoffed at the laggards with their wail of wrong;  
The swarm that came with prejudiced intent  
Wavered a moment and then gatewards went.

But this crushed passage was a sleight of fate—  
Who guides the multitude must set the gait—  
And so the goal to which intention sprung  
Was but a mirror on loose pivots hung.  
Each man who gazed reflected his desires,  
From flaming opulence to clouded fires;  
He who looked upwards to the sweeping sun  
Trampled the nettles, and the roses won;  
While the bent porter with his shoulders sore  
Craved for a short relief and nothing more.  
Yet he who broke the mirror found the grave,  
And then the verdict of the God who gave.

---

## *The Statue*

---

### THE STATUE

FAIR-FRONTED figure, set against the skies,  
To watch the centuries with changeless eyes,  
Repel with stolid strength the wasting blast,  
And scatter seasons as the leaves are cast.  
No breath of burning spirit stirred thy form  
To whetted courage in the hour of storm ;  
No dropping essence from the palm of life  
Shook one reposeful sinew into strife ;  
Yet time in vain employed his chiselled trade  
On the clean lines the master hand had laid ;  
His gathered elements the world might shock,  
But fall defenceless by this sculptured rock.

But what of him whose touch and native tone  
Gave heart and beauty to misshapen stone ;  
Whose ache and agony the mother shares  
When to the call Divine a child she bears ?  
For no one thing from nothingness is born  
But by excess and senses red and worn.  
How fared the seed that shaken from the wind  
Grew to such port and marvel in his mind ?

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

What ground received the messenger of birth?  
The thorns, the wayside, or the ready earth?  
And when at hour forecasted came the call,  
How shaped the artist, how received the call?

Let the clear words of wisdom give reply:  
Except ye venture ye shall surely die,  
For sloth consumes with bitter spreading rust  
In the same measure as a lightning thrust.  
He who must paddle on the guarded beach  
No painted island or wide sea can reach.  
For him no newborn pinnacle shall start  
With thrilling suddenness upon his chart.  
A lofty purpose, strengthened with high zeal,  
Is worth a thousand prayers upon a wheel.  
Ten talents may be given, but the one  
Infused with ardour clammers to the sun.

Note, then, the artist who from Heaven drew,  
On path invisible against the blue,  
A thread of inspiration from the loom  
Where the grey weavers piece the glint and gloom.  
On him was laid with offertories stern  
The burden of a gift and its return—  
A gift inflamed with some celestial fire  
That, burning, bred new flames for its desire,  
And sucked the marrow of his furthest bone  
To give anointment to an idle stone.  
Thus doth the Lord, to fertilize the brain,  
From his high threshing spare a living grain.

---

## *The Statue*

---

In pool subdued, beneath the ocean's swell,  
The placid oyster lies in scalloped shell,  
Until by rough intrusion and assail  
Some aimless irritant impairs his veil ;  
Then with attempt and suffering profuse  
He bathes the sorrow with his brilliant juice,  
Lays smoothness on the wart, and to his ends  
The roughened edges with fair lustre mends ;  
And as each filmy circle draws in place,  
With the bright humours of a bubble's face,  
There were his selvage lay attacked and torn  
Now by a miracle a pearl is born.

And so the tool with lively bite on dust  
Gave symmetry and roundness to a bust.  
Close-reined by patience, he outlined his task,  
And pencilled Nature on a stony mask.  
Enraptured was his soul, and in the glow  
The marble yielded to persistent blow ;  
And each frail mote that trickled in the light  
Announced his service and assured his right.  
A harvest swaying proudly in the sun  
Sings of the furrows that the plough has won,  
And that unchanging form with bloodless sword  
Reveals the answered message of the Lord.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE ORATION

GOOD-BYE, my sweetheart, you have loved me well,  
So well that all the fullness of the earth  
Shakes into lifeless fragments at your knell,  
And the blue realm of God is struck to dearth.  
Our union was a thing so wide of breath,  
So filled to full with throbbing tenderness  
That each warm pulse and fibre challenged death,  
And dared his coming with unarmed address.  
Yet all these years our fortress so serene,  
Our buttressed hold that anchored in the sea,  
Bore no more strength than pictures on a screen,  
Or flickers in the eye of destiny.

I will not here repeat our dainty days,  
Those sanguine hours we drew from jewelled time,  
When Venus and her maidens ventured praise,  
And planned our motions to perfected rhyme,  
Lest at my recklessness the jealous past  
Should wither and erase one single fault,  
Or let a stain with shade be overcast,  
And so appear thee, flawless, in the vault.  
Before Thy face, O Lord, I do declare  
That each soft frailty bred abounding bliss;  
I loved her with her soul unclothed and bare,  
And on the blotches laid my warmest kiss.

---

## *The Oration*

---

Oh, my beloved, whose abandoned form  
I now enshrine beneath a marble keep,  
So still and solid that no earthly storm  
Could waft a spider's strand upon its sleep;  
Let me presume no grossness on thy wing,  
But gossamer as airy as the light,  
When, by severe old death's release of sting,  
Thy soul, uncased, is driven into flight.  
May thy ascension be as smooth and free  
As a furred cloud upon a pleasant wind,  
Or those grey mists that gather on the sea,  
And climb a stair of sunbeams intertwined.

Yet if a mould or rust should blemish thee  
Before the holy angels and the throne,  
May I by penances and bleak decree,  
And writhings of the flesh, thy faults atone.  
That I might make thee perfect in His sight  
I would with serpents crawl upon the dust,  
Bait this my body with the jackal's bite,  
And wrestle at the kennels for a crust.  
And yet, with sorrow's spikes upon my brow,  
With this dull poison in my spirit's flow,  
Though God and all the heavens might allow,  
My most beloved, thou must never know.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

---

### THE TORCH

I WAS alone, except the jewelled night,  
The stolid stars stared imperturbably  
At my poor spirit drifting to the light  
From the last darkness of humanity.  
When the red earth upon the casket lies,  
And blots for ever all the beauty of the day;  
When the clean soul, unnamed, breaks from its ties,  
And, naked, struggles to the outer way.

I was alone upon a pulseless sea,  
Where the horizon yawned to greater deep,  
Where curdled shadows clustered sullenly  
To press my eyelids in eternal sleep.  
Here pain was tearless, sorrow had no sting,  
Love was a threat, and hope a frosty chill;  
All the emotions that, impassioned, ring  
Through life's frail tabernacle here were still.

Then I recalled that one of those who stood  
In awful circle round my bier that day  
Kissed my dead face, for once I did him good,  
And, shaken as with fever, crept away.



---

## *The Torch*

---

Corruption and decay could not arrest  
The loving tribute of his lips, nor freeze  
The wave of tenderness that charged his breast—  
Yet Death is only change to him who sees.

And with that thought, upon the black intense  
There burnt the trembling fragments of a fire—  
A beacon light within the vapours dense,  
Where shipwrecked spirits, striving, might aspire.  
Lean mariners are we who brave the tide  
When Death, the mutineer, has shorn adrift  
Our world-worn lines, yet lively in our pride  
If in the darkened sky there breaks a rift.

That pointed flame upon the distance set  
Swelled this my helpless self, in armament,  
And with a forward, plunging stroke I met  
The throatless void, and, lo! the shade was rent.  
A pathway trickled through the shattered space,  
Like moonbeams dropping on a shaken stream,  
And on this bridge of fickle flakes a face  
Lipped me to life from out my sombre dream.

By one sweet movement of a careless heart,  
One sympathetic touch on life's machine,  
A salving balm upon a wounded part,  
The passages of death were made serene.

---

## *By Suns and Stars*

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Not one regard is voiced upon the earth  
For those who venture through the narrow grave,  
But that a torch is lighted for the birth  
Of some stray soul within the murky cave.

Yet had my golden days been fitly trimmed  
With beads of sympathy and love's red rose,  
Had pity rested where she lightly skimmed,  
And tenderness to sorrow brought repose,  
This changeling soul would, on a placid keel,  
Through avenues of white effulgence swim,  
Amidst the harps and lyres and choral peal,  
And, landing, render gratitude to Him.

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## *The Invocation*

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### THE INVOCATION

GIVE me, O Lord, of favours Thine,  
No bolted castle on the Rhine—

Let courage strong against the wrong  
Be foremost in my battle line.

If turbulent, wild voices rise  
In heedless clamour to the skies,  
With thought serene and honour clean,  
And simple speech may I be wise.

Should I by Fate be charged with might,  
I pray Thee set my moods aright—

No cunning rule to blind a fool,  
But justice for my Lord's delight.

If I be plagued with Pharaoh's sin,  
And pompous mettle hems me in,

Draw from my veins the prideful stains,  
And stall me with my kith and kin.

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## *By Suns and Stars*

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If wayward run the rolls of chance,  
And I be pressed by circumstance,  
    With kindly grace my wrath erase,  
And pardon my intolerance.

And if I falter in the race  
That men maintain for pelf and place,  
    Make me content with what is sent,  
And skyward let me set my face.

Though poverty with me may lie,  
That meagre shape shall not deny  
    The open bin and all within,  
And shelter for the passer-by.

Yet these are minor chords I play,  
To stir the passions of a day—  
    A restless fret against things set,  
And, wanting still, to Thee I pray.

Grant me, O Lord, of Thy right hand,  
The limpid mind to understand  
    The master key of sympathy,  
And I will make no more demand.



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